

ORR Business Plan 2026 to 2027

Better Rail Customer Service

Accessibility across the country's rail network and services for all customers, particularly those with disabilities, continues to be a focus this year.

With our new framework for **benchmarking operators' provision of assistance** now in place, we are better able to judge how well companies are meeting their obligation to provide help free of charge to anyone who needs it, and target our interventions accordingly. We will publish our annual benchmarking report in the autumn and review the approach we used last year, including considering whether there are new evidence sources we can draw on.

Following our 2025 report on how staff at different stations communicate about **passengers who have been assisted onto a train**, we are now supporting operators with trials on using technology to move from phone calls to electronic handover. The aim is to improve the efficiency and accuracy of handover processes and ensure a good service for passengers who need help boarding or disembarking. The operators will report the trial outcomes to ORR.

Last year we introduced a new approach to monitoring operators' compliance with requirements in their Accessible Travel Policies to provide **disability awareness training for passenger-facing staff**. Further work will be done this year to gain assurance on the delivery and quality of staff training.

We continue to hold companies to account for the quality of their **passenger information** and will review operators' processes for ensuring that information provided on station facilities -- such as lifts, car parking and help points -- is accurate.

We will continue to monitor the quality and timeliness of **industry's complaints handling processes** and how train operators take measures to raise passenger awareness of **delay repay**

compensation, improve processes, and enable passengers to submit claims via authorised parties. We will separately undertake policy work to consider if any changes are needed to how disabled passengers seek redress when their booked assistance fails.

We continue to monitor the **Rail Ombudsman's** effective delivery of, and improvements to, its service. This includes its accessibility road map, which sets out actions to ensure that the service is working well for disabled people and others with specific accessibility needs. We will continue to engage with the Independent Rail Retailers group to encourage more of its members to participate in the ombudsman service, thereby ensuring access to alternative dispute resolution for their customers.

Access to the network and licensing of railway operators remains a significant area of work this year. We will carry out our day-to-day role of reviewing and approving decisions taken between Network Rail and operators of passenger and freight services and during 2026 we expect to reach decisions on a number of **open access** applications, affecting a wide range of communities across Britain's rail network.

We will continue to work with applicants as they seek to implement their plans to introduce new **international train services** in the Channel Tunnel. We will chair the International Regulators Group for Rail during 2026, to help support growth in the international rail market and its supply chain.

High-performing and resilient **timetables** are an essential part of providing a good service to passengers and freight customers. We will hold Network Rail to account in complying with established industry timescales in producing timetables, critical to the timely implementation of the long-delayed East Coast Mainline timetable last December. This remains an area of focus due to the significant set of timetable changes planned for December 2026.

We will publish **data** on our website to provide **transparency** around the industry's delivery of timetabling and network access processes and will ensure that Network Rail and operators continue to make use of it.

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